

## Colorado 2018 Primary Election Results and Analysis

Colorado held its primary election last night, setting the stage for the November general election where Walker Stapleton (R) and Jared Polis (D) will compete to replace term-limited Gov. John Hickenlooper (D). In all the statewide races, substantially more votes were cast in Democratic primary contests than in Republican races. Figures from the secretary of state's office indicate that, as of midnight, 1,158,700 voters had returned their mail-in ballots, a number that represents more than 30 percent of the state's total registered voters. Ballots are still being processed, with July 5 being the last day for military and overseas ballots to arrive and the last day for a voter to cure a missing signature or signature discrepancy.

Even without the final numbers, it is clear that voter turnout was up significantly from the 2016 primary election when only 21 percent of the electorate participated—an all-time low. This year's high primary turnout was due in part to Colorado's new law allowing unaffiliated voters to participate for the first time. Of the 1,158,700 ballots tallied thus far, 280,958 were cast by unaffiliated voters, 412,411 by Republicans and 465,331 by Democrats.

Ballots cast in the Democratic primary for governor exceeded those cast in the Republican primary by more than 100,000. This difference was consistent in congressional and state legislative races as well. In a state with voter registration roughly even among Republican, Democrat and unaffiliated voters, this trend is notable and may reflect intensity. But, we have a long way to go and a lot of TV commercials to see before November.

### **Governor**

In the Democratic primary for governor, Boulder-based Congressman Jared Polis (CD-2) routed his three competitors winning with 44.6 percent of the vote after spending a record-breaking and eye-popping \$11 million of his own money. Polis co-founded American Information Systems (AIS), Inc. while still in college. AIS was an internet access provider and was sold in 1998. In 1996, he co-founded a free electronic greeting card website, Bluemountain.com, which was sold in 1999 for \$430 million in stock and \$350 million in cash. In February 1998, Polis founded ProFlowers, an online florist, which was later renamed and acquired by media conglomerate Liberty Media Corporation for \$477 million. Congressman Polis was recently ranked as the second-wealthiest member of Congress and has shown a willingness to spend whatever it takes to win an election. His liberal voting record will draw the attention—and the money—of more conservative national interests, particularly in the oil and gas sector. Polis easily defeated challengers Cary Kennedy (24.74%), former state Sen. Mike Johnston (23.32%), and current Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne (7.28%).

On the Republican side of the aisle, current state Treasurer Walker Stapleton (47.90%) defeated businessman Victor Mitchell (30.14%), former Parker, Colo., Mayor Greg Lopez (13.06%), and corporate financier and nephew of Mitt Romney, Doug Robinson (8.89%) by a wide margin in the race for the party's nominee for governor. Stapleton, a second cousin of former President George W. Bush and Florida Gov. and former presidential candidate Jeb Bush, has long been the anticipated Republican nominee and is Colorado's longest-serving Republican elected official. Stapleton's family has been active in Colorado since the early 1900s and his great-grandfather served as mayor of Denver. He graduated from Williams College in Massachusetts, and holds a graduate degree in business economics from the London School of Economics and an MBA from Harvard Business School. Stapleton began his private sector career in 1997 at Hambrecht & Quist as an investment banker

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and two years later he became director of business development for Live365. He subsequently served as CEO and CFO of various private and publicly traded companies, until assuming office in 2011.

### **Attorney General**

On the Democrat side, the race for attorney general is still too close to call, with Phil Weiser (50.78%) maintaining a slim margin over state Rep. Joe Salazar (49.22%). Vote counting in the AGs race continues through today with former CU Law School Dean Phil Weiser leading Bernie Sanders-backed state Rep. Joe Salazar by more than 9,000 votes. Salazar may have benefited from some name confusion with Ken Salazar, a popular and major force in Colorado politics. This race pitted the mainstream candidate, Weiser, against the far-left Salazar and the general thinking is that Weiser will be a tougher general election candidate.

George Brauchler, district attorney for the 18th Judicial District, was uncontested in the Republican primary for attorney general. The 18th Judicial District includes 1 million Coloradans in Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert and Lincoln counties and it is a jurisdiction larger than the state of Connecticut and 45 percent more populous than Denver. Brauchler is also a colonel in the Colorado Army National Guard, serving as a legal advisor for NORAD/NORTHCOM. Most recently, he served as the chief of military justice for Fort Carson, and ultimately, for the U.S. Division-North, 4th Infantry Division in Tikrit, Iraq. Brauchler is probably best known for his successful prosecution of the Aurora movie theater shooter, James Holmes, who killed 12 people and injured 70 others in 2012.

### **Treasurer**

State Rep. and member of the powerful Joint Budget Committee Dave Young from Greeley handily defeated the "Bernie Sanders-backed" candidate Bernard Douthit with 68 percent of the primary vote. Young is a retired high school math teacher who is not a flashy candidate, but given his experience, may run very well against the Republican nominee.

On the Republican side, real estate developer Brian Watson (37.98%) won a narrow victory over Rocky Mountain Gun Owners-backed state Rep. Justin Everett (36.96%). State Rep. Polly Lawrence was a distant third at 25.06 percent.

### **Secretary of State**

Republican incumbent Wayne Williams did not have a primary opponent. He was elected in 2014 with more votes than any other secretary of state in Colorado history. Williams served as the El Paso County clerk and recorder from 2011 to 2015. Before serving as county clerk, Williams served as an elected El Paso county commissioner from 2003 to 2011.

On the Democrat side, Jena Griswold, a Broomfield attorney with Washington, D.C., experience as a prior aide to outgoing Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, was also unopposed. Her best chance at success is to ride a Blue Wave, which may or may not materialize.

### **Congressional Races**

There is no Senate election in Colorado this year and all House incumbents seeking reelection handily won their primaries. Only one of seven Colorado congressional districts (CD-2) is an open seat without a candidate seeking

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reelection. Only one of the remaining six is in the “toss-up” category (CD-6) with national implications affecting which party secures a majority in the House of Representatives.

CD-1 – U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette, an 11-term lawmaker from Denver, coasted to a primary win in what many thought would be her toughest primary challenge yet. DeGette secured 71 percent of the primary vote against an even more progressive candidate, Saira Rao. Rao ran a well-funded, tough and hard-hitting campaign. DeGette’s substantial margin will make others think long and hard before challenging her in a future primary. The Republican, Casper Stockham, was unopposed in the primary and this memo may be the last time you ever hear of him.

CD-2 – The incumbent, Jared Polis, is vacating this seat to run for governor. Democrat Joe Neguse easily beat a latecomer to the race, Mark Williams, with 65 percent of the vote in this open seat based in Boulder and Larimer counties. Neguse is a very attractive candidate with a great story—the attorney, former CU regent and Hickenlooper cabinet member came to the United States at age six with his parents fleeing war-torn Eritrea. The Republican, Peter Yu, ran unopposed but will have difficulty in this heavily Democratic district.

CD-3 – Incumbent Rep. Scott Tipton was unopposed in the Republican primary in this western and southern Colorado district. Rep. Tipton is popular in his district and building seniority in Congress. Even in a year that might favor Democrats, he should easily defeat the Democratic primary winner, former state Rep. Diane Mitch Bush, who beat two opponents with 64 percent of the vote.

CD-4 – Rep. Ken Buck was unopposed in the primary heading toward his November reelection. The conservative lawmaker represents his constituents well in this heavily agricultural district located in eastern Colorado. The Democrats chose veterinarian Karen McCormick who secured 64 percent of the primary vote and defeated, ironically, the other veterinarian in the race. Rep. Buck should coast to a win in November.

CD-5 – Every two years, incumbent Republican Rep. Doug Lamborn endures a formidable primary challenge and manages to come out on top in this El Paso County district. This year was no exception and Rep. Lamborn faced four challengers in the primary, several of whom had money and significant name ID. Rep. Lamborn received 52 percent of the primary vote, which should give pause to future challengers. Lamborn defeated Darryl Glenn (20%), followed by Owen Hill (17.8%), Bill Rhea (5.7%) and Tyler Stevens (3.4%). He should easily defend his seat in November against Democrat Stephanie Rose Spaulding, who ran unopposed.

CD-6 – The November race in CD-6 is a truly competitive race and on the top of everyone’s DC watch list. Long-term incumbent Republican Rep. Mike Coffman ran unopposed and secured the nomination for his reelection. The district leans slightly Democrat, but Rep. Coffman is a tireless and tenacious campaigner who has beaten well-funded and well-known Democrats in each of his last three races. The Democrat, Jason Crowe, is a moderate Democrat who beat a progressive Bernie Sanders-endorsed candidate, Levi Tillman, by 2-1 to win the primary. Both Coffman and Crowe are articulate, presentable candidates with impressive military backgrounds and will play well in this Aurora/Douglas County district. This is the race to watch this year. If the Democrats want to take the majority in the House, they have to win this seat and others like it.

CD-7 – Popular incumbent Democrat Ed Perlmutter ran unopposed in the primary for this Jefferson County/Adams County district. The Republican, Mark Barrington, was also unopposed. This November election is a replay of an

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election several years ago when Perlmutter easily defeated Barrington—which he should do again in the district with a healthy Democratic advantage.

### **State Legislature – Senate**

The outcomes of the general election in the Colorado State Senate will have a noticeable impact on the landscape of the 2019-2020 legislative sessions. The Senate is currently controlled by Republicans by a margin of 18-16-1, but this balance of power often operates as an 18-17 majority given the one unaffiliated member of the Senate, Cheri Jahn and her tendency to vote with Democrats. The key races are the race for SD 20 – Rep. Jessie Danielson (D) versus Christine Jensen (R) and SD 24 – Rep. Faith Winter (D) versus incumbent Sen. Beth Martinez Humenik (R). Primary turnout and campaign musings have also indicated SD 15, vacated by term-limited Sen. Kevin Lundberg, and SD 16, currently held by incumbent and candidate Sen. Tim Neville, are races to watch. Republicans will have to win three of these four races to maintain their majority; Democrats will have to win two of the four races to take it over.

SD 2 – The seat of term-limited Senate President Kevin Grantham was won by Beth Harz (74.04%) in the Democratic primary and Dennis Hisey (58.02%) in the Republican primary over Stephanie Luck (41.98%). With 21,666 votes cast for Republicans and 8,921 in the Democratic race, and a significant Republican registration advantage, it is widely expected that Dennis Hisey will be the senator from District 2.

SD 7 – A contentious primary between incumbent Sen. Ray Scott and his incumbent counterpart in the House, Rep. Dan Thurlow, ended with Sen. Scott winning handily with 63.97 percent of the vote. As there is no Democratic challenger, Scott will continue as senator for District 7.

SD 32 – A Democratic-leaning open seat vacated by term-limited Sen. Irene Aguilar left three Democrats competing in the primary. Robert Rodriguez (38.67%) was chosen over Zach Neumann (34.53%) and Hazel Gibson (26.80%). It is expected that he will win this seat over uncontested Republican opponent Mark Calonder.

SD 34 – Former Senate Minority Leader Lucia Guzman is also term-limited in Senate District 34, a safe Democratic seat. Democrat Julie Gonzales (63.60%) triumphed over Alan Kennedy-Shaffer (16.62%) and Milo Schwab (19.78%). It is anticipated that Gonzales will be the next senator in this district, winning easily over uncontested Republican candidate Gordon Alley.

### **State Legislature – House of Representatives**

Democrats currently control the House of Representatives by a margin of 37-28 and had several primary races for seats where legislators were term-limited or retiring.

HD 4 – Term-limited State Rep. Dan Pabon's seat created an open seat where Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez (58.37%) won this contest over Amy Beatie (32.63%) and Ed Britt (9.00%). In this heavily Democratic seat in Denver, Gonzales-Gutierrez is expected to win over uncontested Republican Robert "Dave" John.

HD 5 – Term-limited Speaker Crisanta Duran's open seat left four Democratic challengers vying to take her place. Alex Valdez (42.66%) was victorious over Meghan Nutting (28.42%), Joel Judd (17.31%) and Nicky Yollick

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(11.61%). Given the heavily Democrat registration in this Denver district, Valdez will be the eventual representative for this district and will likely defeat his uncontested Republican opponent, Katherine Whitney.

HD 9 – After current incumbent Rep. Paul Rosenthal (D-Denver) failed to qualify for the 2018 ballot, two Democrats stepped in to compete for his seat. Ashley Wheeland (45.71%), a progressive who was heavily endorsed by the Democrat establishment, lost to more progressive-leaning Emily Sirota (54.29%), who was endorsed by Bernie Sanders. Bob Lane (69.3%) beat Angel Christine Saunders (30.07%) in the Republican primary. It is anticipated that Sirota will be the ultimate winner in the general election.

HD 14 – Republican incumbent Rep. Shane Sandridge (61.60%), who was appointed during a vacancy committee this year after then-State Rep. Dan Nordberg received a federal appointment, fended off primary challenger Kanda Calef (38.40%). He is expected to defeat uncontested Democratic challenger Paul J. Haddick in this heavily Republican Colorado Springs district.

HD 18 – Term-limited Democratic Rep. Pete Lee, who ran and won a primary in Senate District 11, will likely be replaced by Marc Snyder (54.89%) who bested Terry Martinez (45.11%) in the Democratic primary. Marc will face Republican Jillian Likness in the general election, where he is expected to win.

HD 21 – Republican incumbent Lois Landgraf (65.47%) won her race against her primary challenger Raymond Garcia. There is no Democratic challenger running in this heavily Republican district in Fountain, so she will likely remain its representative. This will be Landgraf's final term in the statehouse.

HD 22 – In a highly watched Republican primary race for the seat vacated by Rep. Justin Everett (see Treasurer's race above), Colin Larson (50.53%) beat Frank Francone (49.47%) by 104 votes. Colin is considered the more moderate Republican of the two, and is expected to easily win over uncontested Democratic candidate Todd Kastetter.

HD 24 – In another highly watched and somewhat nasty primary, this district was left open by incumbent Rep. Jessie Danielson, who is running for an open seat in SD 20. Democrat Monica Duran (54.53%), who was endorsed by Speaker Duran, defeated the former Edgewater mayor, Kris Teegardin (45.47%). Duran is expected to win in this Democratic-leaning district against uncontested Republican challenger Arthur Erwin.

HD 28 - Incumbent Democratic Rep. Brittany Pettersen, now running for and expected to win in Senate District 22, created an open seat where Kerry Tipper (66.14%) won the Democratic primary against the mononymous candidate, Shakti (33.86%). Tipper will now face uncontested Republican challenger Kristina Joy Alley in what has historically been—and will continue to be—a Democratic district.

HD 34 – Rep. Steve Lebsock, the Democrat who was expelled from the House last year for allegations of sexual misconduct, switched his party to Republican in the final hours before he was removed from the House. As a result, a Republican vacancy committee was tasked with appointing a replacement, Alexander “Skinny” Winkler, to serve HD 34 for the rest of the 2018 legislative session. While Winkler is technically the incumbent, and the uncontested Republican candidate, this district is expected to swing back to the Democrats in November. Winkler

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will face Kyle Mullica (54.54%), who beat Jacque Phillips (45.46%) in the Democratic primary. It is anticipated that Mullica will become the next state representative from this district.

HD 45 – Democrat Danielle Kombo (63.74%) defeated Michael Hupp (36.26%) in the primary contest to determine who will challenge incumbent Republican Minority Leader Patrick Neville. We expect Rep. Neville to easily win this bright red district again. It will be his third term in office.

HD 47 – Vacancy committee appointee and incumbent Rep. Judy Reyher (43.58%) was unsuccessful in her attempt to maintain her seat, losing to Republican primary challenger Don Bendell (56.42%). Bendell will oppose uncontested Democratic candidate Bri Buentello in the general election. Over the last several elections, this seat was held by former Rep. Clarice Navarro (R) who resigned to become the Colorado Farm Service Agency's executive director. This seat is considered a toss-up in 2018.

HD 50 – Incumbent Rep. Dave Young, who is term-limited and now the Democratic candidate for state treasurer, created an open seat in this Greeley district. Rochelle Galindo (58.16%) beat former State Rep. Jim Riesberg in the Democratic primary, much to the surprise of many observers. Galindo will face uncontested Republican candidate Michael Thuener in the general election, where Galindo is anticipated to emerge victorious.

HD 56 – In a surprise upset, incumbent Republican Rep. Phil Covarrubias (37.99%) lost his bid for a second term in office to challenger Rod Bockenfeld (62.01%). This Republican-leaning district is expected to easily go to Bockenfeld, who will face uncontested Democratic candidate Dave Rose in the general election in November.

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